I Only Sink Deeper

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by WordsAblaze

Summary

> “You can hardly blame me for my assumptions, Hannibal. Unless your partner"—she almost invasively scans Will from head to toe, disdain clear in her gaze—”is particularly skilled behind closed doors, it appears safe to conclude his style is no match for yours.”
>
> Hannibal’s breath hitches when Will flinches beside him, and Will finds himself tugged towards the other man before he can blink, an arm wrapped securely, possessively around his waist.
>
> “That was exorbitantly rude,” Hannibal says sharply.

Notes

> Will's turn for a dose of court-mandated ace angst :))
>
> day 29 prompts used: troubled past resurfacing

See the end of the work for more notes

Not much had changed between them when they'd made their relationship official.

If Will really thinks about it—which he has done, *extensively* so—they've probably been, by definition, in a relationship for far longer than they tell everyone they have.

For simplicity's sake, Will sticks to the story that having Hannibal dote over him during his recovery from encephalitis had forced him to realise his feelings for the other man. Hannibal, just to amuse himself, narrates a different moment of revelation to everyone who asks, varying between watching Will amaze everyone at a crime scene, watching him deliver a particularly meticulous lecture, or even watching him unsuccessfully attempt to prepare a meal.

What neither of them admit to anyone else is that their lives had become irrevocably entwined from the very moment they'd met, back in Jack's office. They can't, really, not unless they want to spark an investigation into how Hannibal was permitted to approve Will's mental state with such a biased perspective of him, which would just be an administrative nuisance for everyone involved.

Regardless, because their dynamic had barely changed after they'd agreed doctor-client boundaries were far too limited for their connection, Will doesn't think to question the security of their relationship, not until someone questions it *for* him.

"Ah, Hannibal!" someone calls from behind them, and Will swallows down his groan, having been relishing Hannibal's pretentious but oddly endearing analysis of the painting they've been standing in front of for just over half an hour, because apparently no artistic commentary is worth anything without in-depth contextual awareness or whatever.

"Cressida," Hannibal greets, faux politeness replacing the more genuine enjoyment he'd been sporting within an impressive matter of seconds.

Will readies his own polite smile when Hannibal gently squeezes his hand, and the woman and her husband—soon to be ex-husband, if their body language is anything to go by—turn to face him with an expectant look. Hannibal clears his throat. "This is Will Graham, my partner."

Cressida's eyebrows rise in sync and she grins, a little too widely for it to be well-meant. "How lovely. And isn't he just quaint!"

"I agree. Really, Hannibal, have you been hiding away your love life from us all?" the man asks, though he, at least, seems genuinely curious.

"I'm afraid that's my fault," Will says, "I'm not fond of dinner parties."

Unfortunately, although that excuse has worked on several of Hannibal's acquaintances before, it doesn't seem to be enough this time. Cressida turns to Hannibal with a frown. "It seems highly uncharacteristic for you to date someone so unlike yourself, Hannibal."

Will bristles, but bites his tongue, knowing anything he argues would be used against them both. Hannibal, on the other hand, has no such reservations. He glances pointedly between the two of them, and hums. “I think you’ll find that the two of us are perfectly well-suited to one another. Perhaps you should refrain from making such baseless assumptions in future, lest you unknowingly bring attention to your own interpersonal struggles.”

Cressida blinks, but recovers quickly, schooling her expression into something more defensive. “You can hardly blame me for my assumptions, Hannibal. Unless your partner"—she almost invasively scans Will from head to toe, disdain clear in her gaze—”is particularly skilled behind closed doors, it appears safe to conclude his style is no match for yours.”

Hannibal’s breath hitches when Will flinches beside him, and Will finds himself tugged towards the other man before he can blink, an arm wrapped securely, possessively around his waist. He wants so badly to just close his eyes and remove himself from the interaction, but that would only prove Cressida’s point, so he holds himself as still as possible, though no longer bothering to feign politeness.

“That was exorbitantly rude,” Hannibal says sharply. It’s clear from his tone that the conversation is over, though Cressida’s smug expression suggests that she believes herself to have emerged victorious from the conversation.

The fact that she’s ended up regarding herself somewhere *above* Hannibal is unacceptable, so Will clicks his tongue, summons the sort of courage found only in anger, and turns directly towards her. “It also appears safe to conclude that you’re indefinitely uninvited from Hannibal’s dinner parties. Oh, and good luck with the divorce.”

Hannibal guides them to another room in the gallery before either Cressida or her soon-to-be-ex-husband can reply, carefully, comfortingly caging Will against a wall as soon as they’re far enough not to chance another encounter. “You are spectacular,” he murmurs.

But Will shakes his head. “It's still true that I can’t match your lifestyle, Hannibal. I hadn’t—we haven’t had a chance to discuss it but you—”

“Love you,” Hannibal interrupts, “I *love you* , Will Graham. There needn’t be anything more to it.”

Pulling his hand out of Hannibal’s grasp and folding his arms against his chest, Will swallows heavily. “I can’t. I can’t match you, behind closed doors.”

A pause, followed by a soft sigh.

“Oh, Will. Do you think so low of me as to assume I would disregard everything you’ve revealed to me?” Hannibal asks.

Will glances up sharply, because attacking Hannibal had been far from his intention. Before he can try to verbalise that, though, Hannibal lifts a hand and slowly, gently settles it against Will’s cheek, his fingertips sliding into Will’s curls with practised ease. “I know what has previously been demanded of you. You have entrusted me with your preferences, and I have no intention to force you to partake in anything you do not wish to,” he says.

It sounds too good to be true, and Will says as much, his tone more than a little bitter.

Hannibal steps closer, until the two of them are all but pressed together. Will can practically hear Hannibal's heartbeat, and it takes an incredible amount of self-control to avoid throwing himself against it, but he manages, knowing this is a clarification they need to make sooner rather than later.

"The only closed doors I truly require you to match my skills behind are those of the cellar," Hannibal whispers, so close to Will's ear that he can't help but shiver at the sensation. He shivers again—in something closer to delight this time—when he thinks of all the blood they have and will continue to shed behind those doors.

"And the… bedroom?" Will asks, the words so quiet they likely wouldn't have been audible were the two of them not practically glued together.

Will can *feel* Hannibal's smirk against his neck, and can't help but smile when a soft kiss is planted just below his jawline. "I confess it would be nice for you to join me there more frequently, rather than forsaking my company in favour of those atrocious dog beds."

The tension physically leaves Will's body, his shoulders dropping at least an inch as his frown morphs into amusement. "Is dog hair your only concern, Count Lecter?" he teases, only half joking.

Hannibal hums thoughtfully, one of his hands settling around Will's waist to close any remaining distance between them. He pulls his head back just enough to meet Will's eyes, and softly returns his smile. "Unless I can convince you to cut ties with that unflattering cotton hoard of yours?"

"I am *not* wearing silk to bed, Hannibal," Will laughs.

"A shame," Hannibal mutters, "though I suppose it hardly matters for tonight."

Will's turn to smirk. He curls his own arms around Hannibal, entirely aligning the beating of their hearts. "Divorce can be such a messy affair, can't it?"

"Indeed," Hannibal drawls, and Will uses the weighted contentment in his voice to rebury his sexual history of self-doubt. Besides, they have a twin tableau to plan, and experience tells him that'll be far more rewarding than continuing to question his worth.

End Notes

yes it's cliché but the self-indulgence is real.

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